

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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P R 091640Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2586

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION UN

AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1244

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO WHITE HOUSE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR UR GR

SUBJECT: TO VIMA SUGGESTS KREMLIN WILL SOON LAUNCH A
"FRIENDSHIP OFFENSIVE" TOWARDS GREECE

1. THE LEAD FIVE COLUMN STORY ON THE FIRST PAGE OF
SUNDAY FEB 8, TO VIMA (LIBERAL, OPPOSITION)
PREDICTS THAT USSR MAY SOON CARRY OUT A "FRIENDSHIP
OFFENSIVE" TOWARDS GREECE, WITH ITS INAUGURATION TO
OCCUR SOMETIME AFTER THE EXPECTED APPOINTMENT AND
ARRIVAL OF A NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ATHENS. A
SUB HEADLINE OFFERS THE PROSPECT OF "AN EXCHANGE OF
SUMMIT MEETINGS" DEVELOPING FROM SUCH AN "OFFENSIVE".

2. THE UNSIGNED TO VIMA ARTICLE, WHICH CITES EITHER
"EXTREMELY WELL INFORMED CIRCLES", "FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC
SOURCES" OR "SOME REPORTS" FOR ITS RAW MATERIAL,
TAKES AS ITS POINT OF DEPARTURE THE EXPECTED REPLACEMENT
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IN THE NEAR FUTURE OF CURRENT SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN

ATHENS IGOR EJOV. ONCE HE IS REPLACED, THE STORY STATES, IT IS EXPECTED THERE WILL EMERGE A NEW SOVIET POLICY AIMED AT NEUTRALIZING THE NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS CREATED IN GREECE SINCE THE SUMMER OF 1974 BY THE USSR'S "CLEARLY PRO TURKISH STANCE". THE TO VIMA PIECE ASSERTS THAT SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN ATHENS HAVE STRESSED IN THEIR REPORTING TO MOSCOW THAT THE SOVIET CYPRUS POLICY HAS CAUSED "DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT" EVEN AMONG THOSE GREEKS OTHERWISE FRIENDLY DISPOSED TOWARDS THE USSR. THE EMBASSY HAS THUS PROPOSED A REVISION OF SOVIET POLICY TO "DISSIPATE THOSE ADVERSE IMPRESSIONS". THE ARTICLE STATES THAT WHILE NO SPECTACULAR GESTURES OF A SUBSTANTIVE NATURE ARE IMMINENT, THERE ARE EXPECTED "CERTAIN POLITICAL EXPRESSIONS" AIMED AT COUNTERING CHARGES THAT THE SOVIETS FOLLOW A PRO TURKISH POLICY -- ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS CYPRUS.

3. AN UNDERLYING THESIS SUPPORTING THE TO VIMA PIECE HOLDS THAT KREMLIN OFFICIALS HAVE ALREADY CONCLUDED THAT ITS POLITICAL OPENING TOWARD ANKARA -- AS EXEMPLIFIED BY KOSYGIN'S RECENT VISIT THERE -- IS ALREADY TOO WIDE AND HAS ACTUALLY HARMED SOVIETS INTERESTS BOTH IN GREECE AND IN CYPRUS. THE ARTICLE ASSERTED THAT AN ATTEMPT WILL BE MADE "TO BALANCE THE SITUATION", E.G. THROUGH SUCH POSSIBILITIES AS THE NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR BEING INSTRUCTED TO SOUND OUT THE GOG ON A POSSIBLE SOVIET-GREEK SUMMIT MEETING. TO VIMA ALSO POSITS AS A POSSIBLE SOVIET PLOY THE ISSUANCE OF "SENSATIONAL SOVIET STATEMENTS ON THE CYPRUS ISSUE". AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE NEED FOR THE USSR TO REDRESS ITS IMBALANCE ON THE CYPRUS QUESTION, TO VIMA REMINDS ITS READERS THAT A GOG SOURCE ONLY SEVERAL DAYS AGO REITERATED ITS EARLIER 1974 STATEMENT THAT "SOVIET POLICY ON THE CYPRUS ISSUES TENDS TO SERVE SOVIET INTERESTS". TO COUNTER SUCH AN IMPRESSION TO VIMA STATES THAT SOVIET DIPLOMATS HERE HAVE "OFF THE RECORD" CITED KOSYGIN'S STATEMENT IN ANKARA ON THE NECESSITY TO WITHDRAW ALL FOREIGN TROOPS FROM CYPRUS AS A PROOF OF "MOSCOW'S SINCERE CONFIDENTIAL

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DESIRE" TO HELP SOLVE THAT ISSUE. THE TO VIMA PIECE NOTES THAT THE TIMING OF SUCH A NEW ORIENTATION OF SOVIET POLICY TO COINCIDE WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW AMBASSADOR HERE REFLECTS THE "WELL KNOWN TACTICS OF THE GREAT POWERS" TO PRESENT EVERY NEW AMBASSADOR AS BEARING WITH HIM A BETTER POLICY THAN THAT OF HIS PREDECESSOR.

4. COMMENT. EMBASSY HAS NOTED THAT RECENT CHANGES IN THE DIPLOMATIC STAFF OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE HAVE SERVED TO UPGRADE THE STAFF'S QUALITY -- INCLUDING GREEK LANGUAGE ABILITY. A CASE IN POINT IS THE EMBASSY'S NEW COUNSELOR BORIS PANOVA WHO POSSESSES A FINE INTELLECT AND BRINGS WITH HIM EXPERIENCE GARNERED FROM TWO PRIOR TOURS HERE. WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE HERE THAT WOULD SUPPORT VIMA'S THESIS THAT NEW SOVIET INITIATIVES ARE IN THE OFFING, IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THE SOVIETS ARE AWARE THAT KEY DECISIONS ARE BEING CONSIDERED BY GOG RELATING TO THEIR NATO ROLE, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US IN THE FIELD OF MUTUAL SECURITY. IT WOULD NOT THEREFORE BE SURPRISING TO SEE A MORE ACTIVE SOVIET DIPLOMACY IN COMING MONTHS.

KUBISCH

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